

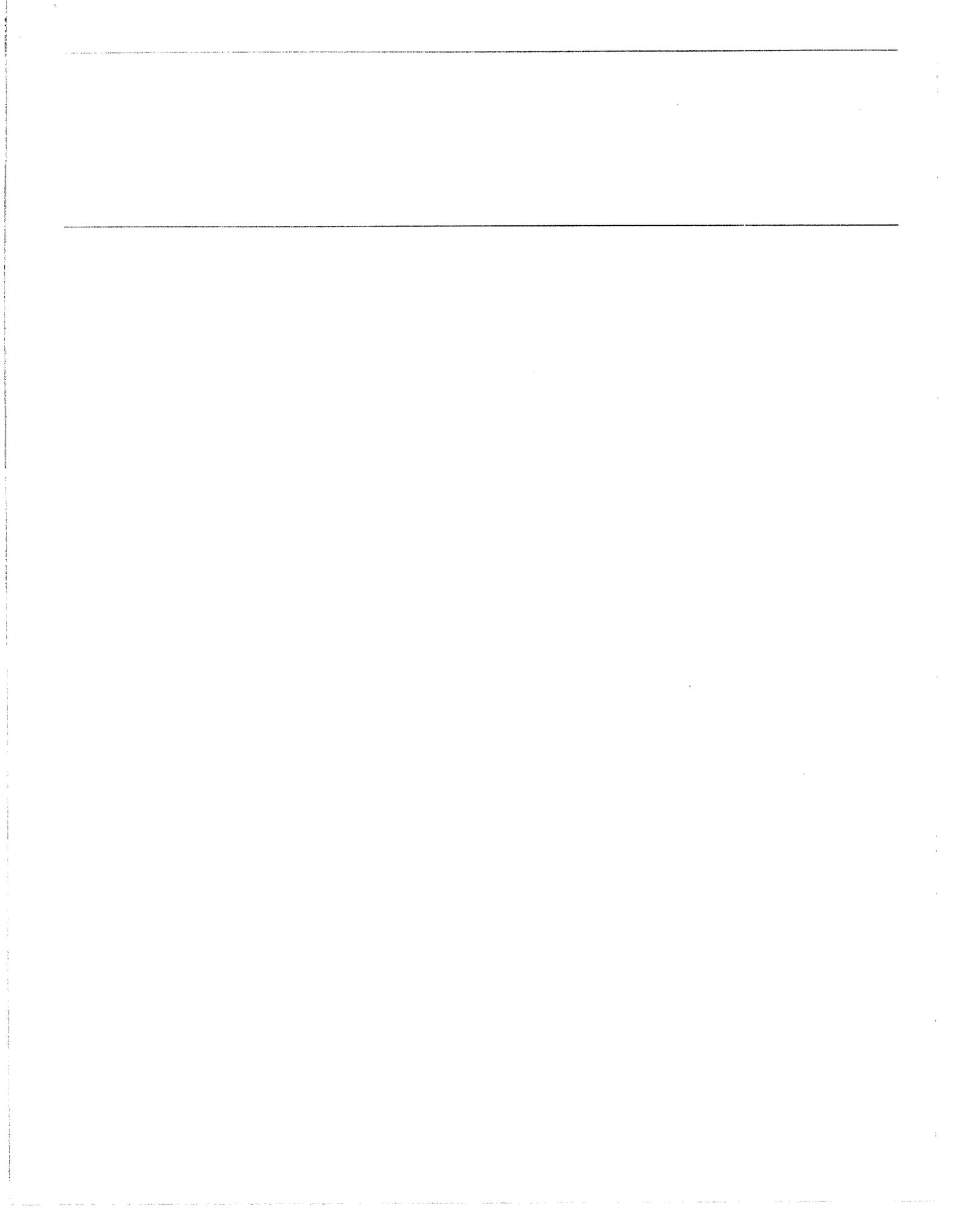
May 1991

# MILITARY TRAINING OPTIONS

## Feasibility of Using Civilian Institutions



143798



**Program Evaluation and  
Methodology Division****B-243174****May 1, 1991****The Honorable Sam Nunn  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate****The Honorable Les Aspin  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives**

The National Defense Authorization Act for 1990 and 1991 requires that the General Accounting Office submit a report to your committees regarding the practicality and desirability of using civilian educational institutions to provide technical training to military personnel. In planning for meeting this requirement, we learned that the Office of the Secretary of Defense had already contracted with the RAND Corporation to address these same issues. During our discussions with committee staff, it was agreed that, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, we should carefully monitor the RAND project to ensure that RAND's report would respond to the congressional language contained in section 517 of the act. This approach proved successful, largely because of the excellent support and assistance we received from the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense managing the RAND contract. In our opinion, RAND's report, entitled Who Should Train: Substituting Civilian-provided Training for Military Training, meets the objectives of the act by demonstrating the feasibility of civilian training for certain specialties and by designing a rigorous demonstration project to further test the effectiveness of such an approach. The RAND report is scheduled for release in May.

Several recent and ongoing experimental programs in which civilians provide training to military recruits are described in the RAND report. Included are examples of training by civilian institutions before and after enlistment, training for active force and reserve personnel, and training provided in civilian institutions and at military bases by civilians under contract to the military.

Not all these programs have been fully implemented and none has been comprehensively evaluated. Nevertheless, in the few formal and informal assessments that have been performed, these programs have been found to be less costly than traditional individual skills training. However, one cannot extrapolate from these findings; RAND was unable

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to recover sufficient data on which to base independent quantitative estimates of the savings that can be expected from similar programs.

Even less information exists concerning the relative quality of civilian-provided and traditional military skills training. Comparative judgments of technical proficiency acquired through civilian and military training were expressed by only two of the five past experiments with civilian-provided training reported by RAND. One of these programs found little difference between skill levels of graduates from the two training systems, and the other found the civilian training superior.

The report concludes that in the past the primary source of resistance to a wider use of civilian training programs for active duty personnel has been the services themselves. The military has expressed concerns about the lack of military acculturation among recruits who are sent to duty stations without traditional military training. The fear is of consequent morale problems, including inadequate discipline and high attrition rates.

In general, RAND expresses the opinion that civilian-provided training is likely to offer greater benefits for reserve and National Guard forces than for active duty forces, and, within the active forces, for preaccession than for postaccession trainees. However, more evidence than currently exists is needed to draw any firm conclusions. As the report notes, "both the military and the civilian community lack data to systematically evaluate the feasibility of civilian-provided training on cost, quality, or other grounds. As a result, debate and opinion often substitute for evidence." RAND therefore recommends that a carefully designed demonstration project be implemented to compare various civilian training scenarios against traditional military training on effects such as training costs, proficiency, accession, and retention. The recommended project would make extensive use of ongoing programs in order to minimize costs. We agree that such a project should be helpful in obtaining more conclusive evidence on both quality and potential cost savings.

We also call your attention to another recent report that reviews the feasibility of a broader use of civilian institutions in individual skill training for selected military occupations. This review was performed by the Air Force's Air Training Command and the report, entitled A Contract Training Feasibility Study, was issued in December 1990. The Air Training Command concluded that substantial cost savings would result from a preaccession training model in which potential recruits

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would be provided a modest stipend and living allowance while attending specialized skill training at a community college after signing an enlistment contract. The savings associated with postaccession civilian contract training were judged to be significantly less. The report found no reason to expect that the quality of training would be any less than that presently afforded to recruits.

Like RAND, the Air Training Command reported a concern expressed by Air Force personnel that contract training might impair a recruit's development of military qualities such as self-discipline and adherence to military standards. Yet the study group's analysis found no differences in promotion, retention, and disciplinary problems between personnel who had attended traditional technical training and those who had, because of previously acquired skills, been directly assigned to the field. The report anticipates no diminution in military qualities because of contract training, particularly since basic military training would intervene between technical training and assignment to a unit.

Both the RAND and the Air Force reports recognize that a civilian training model is not applicable to all types of skills training. RAND suggests that such occupational groups as medical and dental specialties, food service, vehicle driving and maintenance, and construction are good candidates for civilian training alternatives. The Air Force report identifies three specific specialties for a demonstration of a preaccession training model: Communication-Computer Systems Controller (493X0), Dental Specialist (981X0), and General Purpose Vehicle Maintenance Specialist (472X2). The report proposes a test of the model at five community colleges for each specialty. The test would require legislative authorization to provide training, lodging, and subsistence allowance to recruits prior to enlistment and would last approximately 30 months.

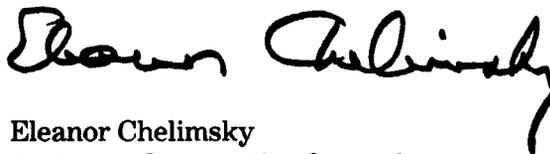
From these reports, we have concluded that sufficient evidence exists concerning the feasibility and potential savings of civilian contract training to justify further exploration of controlled experiments in all services. We believe that the RAND report provides a reasonable experimental design for such demonstration projects for both active and reserve components of all services. We also find that the Air Force report not only offers a more specific program capable of being implemented fairly soon within that service but also, because of the Air Force's sponsorship, may help overcome the services' resistance to civilian training identified in the RAND study. Finally, we agree with RAND that, if the broader cross-service experiment is performed, it

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should be centralized under the control of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel.

We requested and received oral comments from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and have incorporated them where appropriate. We are sending copies to the Secretary of Defense and others who are interested and will make copies available to others upon request. We did our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call me at (202) 275-1854 or Kwai-Cheung Chan, Director of Program Evaluation in Physical Systems Areas, at (202) 275-3092. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix I.



Eleanor Chelimsky  
Assistant Comptroller General



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# Major Contributors to This Report

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